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May 12, 2008

PRESS RELEASE-For Immediate Release

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Vaccination is the Best Protection Against Measles

TWIN FALLS- Confirmation of measles, in nine states (including Washington and Arizona) has prompted South Central Public Health to advise people to verify that they and their children are current on measles vaccinations. Vaccination is the best protection against measles.

The measles, a highly contagious virus, causes rash, a cough, runny nose, eye irritation, and fever. Symptoms appear a week to three weeks after exposure. The virus can lead to ear infections, pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and death. Measles spreads easily through coughing and sneezing. It is contagious four days before and four days after a rash starts. Exposure can occur up to two hours after an infected person has departed an area.

“Out of the 77 measles cases that have been reported to the Center for Disease Control in 2008, 76 of those were unimmunized or lacked documentation of vaccination.” said Cheryle Becker, SCPH Epidemiologist Manager. “There have been a total of 6 outbreaks around the nation this year, including the latest cases from Washington.”

The measles vaccine requires two doses for 99 percent effectiveness. Children take the first dose when they’re 12 to 15 months old. At least 28 days must separate the two doses, but children typically take the second dose between the ages of 4 and 6. Adults born after 1957 should get at least one dose of the measles vaccine unless they can show they’ve either had the vaccine or the disease. Pregnant women should wait until after giving birth to get the vaccine. People with life-threatening allergic reactions to gelatin, neomycin, or previous doses of the measles vaccine should not take the vaccine.

Because the virus spreads so easily, people with symptoms should call their health care provider before visiting. Calling ahead will protect others from exposure.

“People that plan on traveling should be aware that the current outbreaks of measles in the United States have been traced back to foreign countries.” Becker said. “Anyone planning to travel abroad or even just within the United States should check their vaccination records and make sure they are up-to-date.”

If vaccination records show a need for measles vaccine or you plan on traveling abroad, call your local health care provider or South Central Public Health (737-5900) for more information and/or an appointment.

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